Annual Surveillance Technology Report

– 2025 –

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city of Columbia
Police Department

COLUMBIA POLICE Missouri

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Introduction

Pursuant to the City of Columbia Law Enforcement Surveillance Oversight Ordinance, the Columbia Police Department is required to document and publicly report its use of surveillance technology. This 2025 Annual Surveillance Technology Report is submitted in compliance with those requirements and is intended to provide the City Council and the public with a transparent overview of authorized technologies, their approved purposes, oversight practices and the safeguards in place to protect civil rights and civil liberties.

In 2025, the Columbia Police Department utilized authorized technologies to support law enforcement operations in accordance with established departmental policies, City ordinance and applicable legal standards. The deployment and use of these technologies were guided by written directives designed to ensure effectiveness, accountability and full compliance with constitutional protections.

Throughout the reporting period, approved technological systems were used to support crime analysis, investigative functions and operational decision-making. Information obtained through these systems was accessed, used, retained and shared solely for legitimate law enforcement purposes and in accordance with established policies governing data management, security and supervisory oversight. Analytical tools were used to identify crime patterns and trends, supporting data-informed deployment strategies and resource allocation.

Surveillance technologies utilized during 2025 – including camera systems, license plate readers, and associated analytical platforms – were operated within clearly defined use parameters, with established access controls and audit requirements. These systems supported investigative efforts through the lawful identification of suspects and the corroboration of evidence. Communication technologies, including radios and mobile data systems, were used to enhance coordination, support timely response and promote officer safety, consistent with operational and information security standards.

Report Elements

The Annual Surveillance Technology Report shall include the following elements, consistent with Article IV, Section 21-61 of the City of Columbia Code of Ordinances:

- **Use and Deployment Overview**

A general description of how each approved surveillance technology was used during the reporting period, including the general locations and neighbourhoods where the technology was deployed.

- **Data Sharing with External Entities**

A general description of whether and how frequently data obtained through surveillance technology was shared with non-city entities, the types of data shared and the general justification for any such disclosures.

- **Community Complaints**

A summary of complaints received from community members regarding the use of surveillance technology during the reporting period.

- **Internal Audits and Policy Compliance**

The results of any internal audits required by applicable technology use policies, including documentation of any identified violations of policy and corrective actions taken, where applicable.

- **Effectiveness and Outcomes**

Information, including crime statistics where applicable, sufficient to assist the City Council in evaluating whether the surveillance technology has been effective in achieving its identified and approved purposes.

- **Cost and Funding Information**

Total costs, to the extent feasible, associated with each surveillance technology, including personnel, maintenance and other ongoing operational expenses, as well as anticipated funding required for continued use.

- **Policy Modifications**

Any requested or proposed modifications to an existing surveillance technology use policy.

Definitions

These definitions cover key terms related to technologies used by the Columbia Police Department as referenced in this report.

Static Video Surveillance Cameras

Static video surveillance cameras are permanently installed video recording devices with a fixed field of view and no capability for remote pan, tilt or zoom. These cameras provide continuous monitoring of designated public or controlled areas for legitimate law enforcement and public safety purposes. Use, access, data retention and dissemination are governed by departmental policy and applicable law.

Body Worn Cameras

Body worn cameras (BWCs) are department-issued, wearable audio and video recording devices worn by sworn officers and community service aides (CSAs) while performing official duties. BWCs are activated and used in accordance with established policy (Policy 1007) to document law enforcement activities, promote transparency and accountability, preserve evidentiary records and protect the rights of both the public and department personnel. Recording, access, retention and release of BWC data are strictly governed by policy and law.

Mobile Audio Video Systems

Mobile audio video (MAV) systems are vehicle-mounted audio and video recording devices installed in marked police vehicles. These systems capture audio and visual information related to law enforcement activity occurring inside and in the immediate vicinity of the vehicle. MAV systems are activated and used pursuant to departmental policy and are intended to document enforcement actions, enhance officer safety and preserve evidentiary records. Data management and access are subject to established controls and audit processes.

License Plate Readers

License plate readers (LPRs), also known as automatic license plate readers (ALPRs), are camera-based systems designed to capture images of vehicle license plates and associated metadata from vehicles traveling on public roadways. LPR systems utilize optical character recognition to convert plate images into machine-readable data, which may be compared against authorized databases for legitimate law enforcement purposes, including locating stolen vehicles, identifying vehicles associated with criminal investigations and assisting in missing or endangered person cases. Use, access, retention, sharing and auditing of LPR data are governed by departmental policy (Policy 1008) and applicable legal standards.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) are remotely piloted aircraft operated by trained and authorized personnel to provide aerial video assistance during approved law enforcement and public safety operations. UAS deployment is limited to specific purposes, including critical incident response, accident scene documentation, crowd management for public events, search and rescue operations, and locating missing persons. All UAS operations are conducted in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations, departmental policy (Policy 1002) and applicable law, and do not permit indiscriminate or continuous surveillance of the public.

Deployed Technologies

The following outlines the surveillance technology deployed in 2025, along with details on their use.

Flock Safety Cameras

Flock Safety – (Atlanta, Georgia)

Founded in 2017, Flock Safety provides a public-safety operating system used by more than 6,000 communities across 49 states, supporting more than 5,000 law enforcement agencies and 1,000 private-sector partners. The platform is designed to capture objective vehicle-based evidence and deliver actionable intelligence directly to the professionals responsible for preventing, investigating and solving crime.

Flock Safety works in partnership with the entire community, including neighborhoods, businesses, school systems, law enforcement agencies and elected officials – recognizing that effective crime reduction requires coordinated collaboration across areas.

Flock Safety's platform leverages license plate recognition (LPR) technology to support law enforcement in both proactive policing and post-incident investigations. Agencies utilizing Flock LPR systems report significant improvements in clearance rates, particularly for serial, organized and mobile crimes that traditionally challenge law enforcement operations.

These crimes include, but are not limited to:

- Homicide and violent assaults
- Sexual offenses and domestic violence
- Hit-and-run incidents
- Auto theft and organized retail crime

Flock LPR systems also play a critical role in AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts, human trafficking investigations and missing-person recoveries. Agencies nationwide have used the platform to assist in the recovery of hundreds of missing or abducted individuals, often within critical time windows.

Analysis of Discriminatory or Adverse Impact

The primary risk is not that the camera system itself is discriminatory, it's that ALPR deployment, query practices and enforcement decisions can concentrate in certain neighbourhoods or traffic corridors and amplify disparities if the department doesn't set constraints. Adverse-impact controls practices are in place that include: documented placement/deployment logic, strict hotlist source standards, hit confirmation requirements before stops, query logging with supervisory review and publicly defensible retention limits.

General Description

Proactive Capabilities

Real-time alerts, such as when a vehicle associated with a stolen vehicle report, wanted suspect or missing person enters a monitored area.

Investigative Capabilities

Rapid identification of whether a vehicle was present at or near a crime scene, providing investigators with actionable leads when traditional witness or physical evidence is unavailable.

The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Summary of Reported Crimes in the Nation (RCN) for 2024. The RCN summary report includes data through National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the Summary Reporting System (SRS). The FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program provides a nationwide view of crime based on data submission from law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

National crime solvability is measured by the FBI using clearance rates, which represent the percentage of reported crimes that are closed by an arrest or "exceptional means" (e.g., the death of a suspect). Data shows approximately 43.8% of violent crimes have been cleared by arrest or exceptional means and only 15.9 % of property crimes have been cleared by arrest or exceptional means.

One can surmise that crimes in one respect are often not solved due to the absence of identifying information such as vehicle or suspect information that can prove or disprove facts. Flock Safety's LPR technology directly addresses this evidentiary gap, providing continuous, 24/7 investigative support that enhances patrol response, follow-up investigations and case solvability.

In 2025 Flock Safety has installed about 86 % of the planned devices in the City of Columbia.

Data Sharing

Flock Safety is designed to enhance public safety without compromising civil liberties.

- **Vehicle Data Only**

The system captures vehicle-related information only and does not use facial recognition or biometric identification.

- **Agency Ownership of Data**

Participating agencies retain full ownership and control of all data collected. Data is never sold or shared with third parties.

- **Comprehensive Audit Controls**

Every system search requires a documented justification or case number. All user activity is logged in a permanent audit trail, supporting transparency, accountability and policy compliance.

- **Limited Data Retention**

Data is automatically deleted after 30 days on a rolling basis, unless retention is extended by the agency in accordance with policy or legal requirements.

- **Enterprise-Grade Security**

All data is securely stored in encrypted form within the Amazon Web Service (AWS) cloud environment, meeting high standards for availability, integrity and confidentiality.

- **Limited Sharing**

CPD only shares data with other law enforcement agencies within the State of Missouri. This list was added in 2025 and can be viewed on the department's transparency portal.

Citizen Complaints

During the reporting period, the Columbia Police Department received no substantiated complaints regarding the use of the Flock Safety system.

The department did receive one complaint related to the placement of a camera. Camera locations are determined based on objective criteria, including crime patterns, traffic flow and the goal of maximizing system effectiveness with a limited number of devices. Placement decisions are also informed by technical recommendations from Flock Safety regarding optimal positioning for data capture.

All camera placements are evaluated to ensure they align with approved use policies, operational needs and community safety objectives.

Impact on Crime

Flock Safety impacts crime primarily by strengthening law enforcement's ability to identify, locate and track vehicles associated with criminal activity. Many serious crimes against persons and property crimes go unsolved because there is no suspect identification or vehicle description. LPR data fills this gap by providing objective, time-stamped and location-specific vehicle intelligence that investigators would not otherwise have.

From an investigative standpoint, Flock significantly improves case solvability. Detectives can determine whether a vehicle was present near a crime scene, establish movement patterns, corroborate timelines or eliminate suspects early in an investigation. This is especially impactful for auto theft, burglaries, robberies, hit-and-runs, organized retail crime and violent crimes involving suspect vehicles. The result is faster lead development and higher clearance potential.

Operationally, Flock enables proactive policing through real-time alerts. When a stolen vehicle, wanted vehicle or vehicle associated with a missing person enters a monitored area, officers receive immediate notification. This allows for timely patrol response, targeted enforcement and rapid suspect containment. These capabilities are critical during AMBER Alerts, Silver Alerts and active investigations involving public safety risk.

Flock also strengthens evidentiary support for prosecution. LPR data provides objective digital evidence showing vehicle presence, travel direction and timing. This evidence is routinely used to support probable cause, validate investigative theories and corroborate other forms of evidence such as witness statements or digital forensics. In cases with limited physical evidence, LPR data can be decisive.

Importantly, Flock is a force multiplier, not a standalone solution. It does not prevent crime by itself, nor does it replace traditional investigations, community policing or officer judgment. Its effectiveness depends on camera placement, policy controls, analyst

and patrol integration, and disciplined use by trained personnel. When properly implemented, it reduces investigative dead ends and maximizes the value of officer time.

In practical terms, the impact of using Flock Safety for law enforcement is clear: more actionable leads, faster investigations, improved clearance potential, enhanced missing-person recovery, and stronger, objective evidence—while maintaining accountability and privacy safeguards.

Success Stories

- **2025-012077 – Kidnapping**

In December 2025, a suspect stole a vehicle from a Columbia Motel parking lot with two sleeping children, ages 1 and 3, inside. Columbia Police issued a state-wide AMBER Alert and turned to the Flock ALPR System for information. Within minutes, a Flock camera detected the stolen vehicle traveling westbound on I-70. Columbia Police detectives were able to provide real-time intelligence to the Missouri State Highway Patrol about the location of the missing children, and a MSHP trooper was able to locate the vehicle nearly 60 miles away. The trooper engaged in a lengthy pursuit with the vehicle and was able to safely recover the children unharmed and arrest the suspect on kidnapping charges.

- **2025-009210 – First-degree Assault**

In September 2025, a suspect attempted to stab and strangle a female victim inside a vehicle, resulting in defensive knife wounds to the victim's hands. Flock ALPR cameras were instrumental in the investigation, providing objective data that placed the suspect's vehicle at the crime scene during the assault and tracking his movements across Columbia throughout the night. By utilizing these real-time camera hits to narrow the search area, law enforcement successfully located and stopped the suspect just hours later, leading to his arrest and the recovery of forensic evidence including the weapon and blood-stained clothing.

- **2025-006329 and 2025-009126 – Burglary Investigation**

In July and September 2025, two residential burglaries occurred on Torrey Pines Drive. Both crimes shared a highly specific modus operandi: the suspects struck during the day while residents were running errands, forced entry through the front door using a pry bar and bypassing electronics to target high-value jewellery, silver and prescription medications. Detectives used a combination of residential surveillance cameras and Flock ALPRs to identify both vehicles involved in these burglaries. Detectives were able to use this information to track these individuals back to the location where they were staying, which ultimately led to the identification and arrest of the suspects.

- **2025-005471 – Homicide**

In June 2025, a robbery outside of a downtown business escalated into a high-speed vehicle pursuit and homicide. The victim was robbed and physically assaulted by four suspects who fled the scene in a vehicle. The victim pursued the suspects in his own vehicle while on the phone with 911. The pursuit turned deadly when the suspects opened fire. The victim was

struck by the gunfire, lost control of his vehicle and crashed in a nearby residential area, tragically dying at the scene. The Flock LPR and Live Cameras were instrumental in recording evidence of the crime and establishing the timeline, locations and identification of the vehicles involved in this homicide.

- **2025-005850 – Drug Investigation**

In June 2025, the Columbia Police Department concluded a significant narcotics investigation into a large-scale drug distribution operation. Following a proactive traffic stop and a subsequent residential search warrant, officers seized approximately 19.6 pounds of methamphetamine, 4.6 pounds of cocaine, heroin and a loaded firearm. Flock hits provided real-time intelligence that the target vehicle was returning to Columbia after a suspected supply run. This information allowed officers to position themselves for a targeted traffic stop.

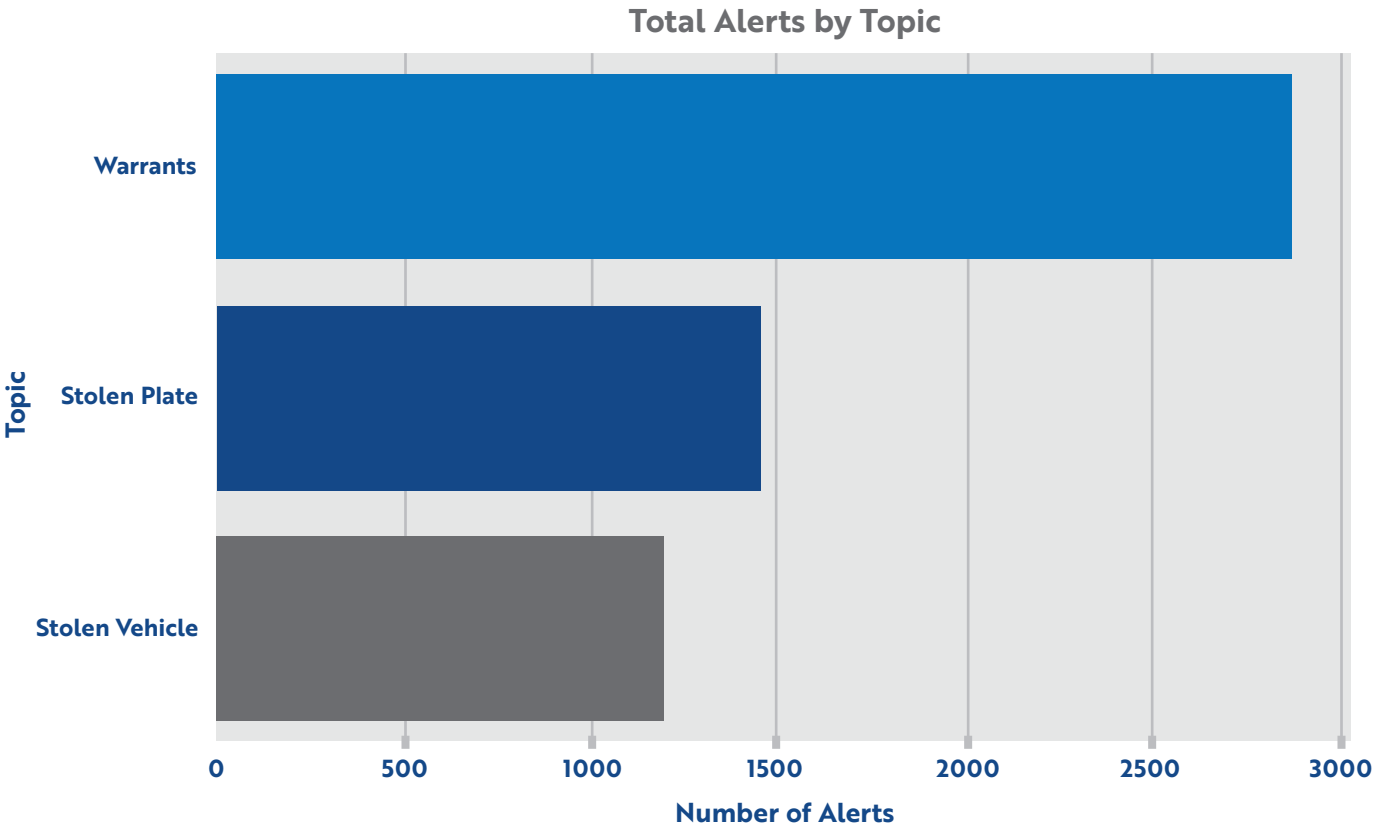
Data and Information

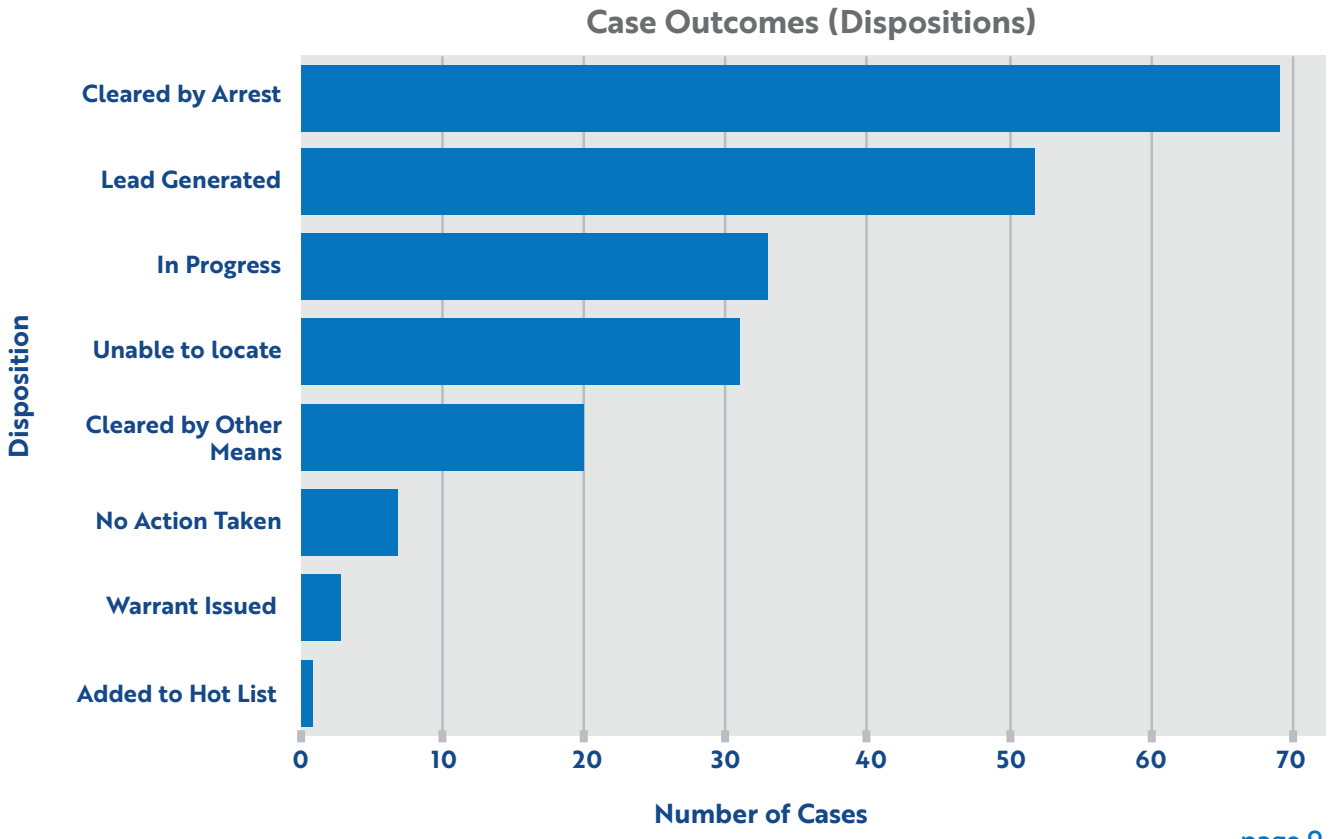
During the reporting period, the Flock Safety system generated 5,521 total alerts, with activity concentrated across three primary enforcement categories. Warrant-related alerts accounted for 2,877 hits (52.1%), representing the majority of system activity. Stolen license plates generated 1,452 hits (26.3%), while stolen vehicles accounted for 1,192 hits (21.6%). Collectively, these categories comprised 100% of high-priority alert activity, reflecting the system's alignment with enforcement objectives targeting wanted individuals and mobile property crimes.

Temporal analysis of alert activity demonstrates measurable fluctuations in system utilization. Implementation of the Flock Safety system did not start until March 2025. Monthly trends indicate elevated enforcement and detection periods during late summer and fall 2025, with peak daily alert volumes exceeding 60-70 hits. These increases are consistent with expanded camera deployment, increased plate-read capture rates and seasonal crime trends. The data reflects a system operating at scale, with consistent throughput and identifiable surge periods that support targeted deployment strategies.

The department tracked 217 case outcomes directly associated with Flock alerts, producing measurable enforcement and investigative results. Cleared by arrest accounted for 69 cases (31.8%), representing the largest disposition category and demonstrating direct enforcement impact. Lead generation accounted for 52 cases (24.0%), indicating the system's value in developing actionable investigative intelligence. Active investigations ("In Progress") accounted for 33 cases (15.2%), while 31 cases (14.3%) were classified as Unable to Locate, reflecting operational limitations in real-time interception. The remaining cases fall within additional or unclassified disposition categories, indicating a need for continued refinement in outcome tracking and reporting consistency.

Overall, the data demonstrates that the Flock Safety system functions as a high-yield enforcement and investigative tool, with over 55% of tracked cases resulting in arrest or actionable leads, and sustained alert volume supporting proactive policing and investigative efficiency.





Analysis of Discriminatory or Adverse Impact

The department is unaware of any evidence to suggest this system has any discriminatory impact on any group.

Total Cost

The City of Columbia has committed to a multi-year deployment of the Flock Safety LPR system with both upfront and ongoing costs. The first-year cost for implementation – including hardware, installation, software access and initial service – was approximately $584,850, consisting of about $539,400 funded through police and general city resources and an additional $45,000 contributed by the Parks and Recreation department for cameras located in park areas.

After the initial deployment in 2025, the City's expected cost for Fiscal Year 2026 of the Flock Safety system is approximately $515,000, which includes about $476,000 for police and general fund operations and roughly $39,000 for Parks and Recreation. These recurring costs cover continued system access, cloud storage, maintenance, updates and operational support under Flock Safety's subscription-based model. The Flock Safety System contract is for two years and expires in March 2027, when it will be renegotiated.

In practical terms, the financial impact of the Flock Safety system on Columbia taxpayers is relatively modest when viewed at the per-capita level, particularly when compared to the scale of coverage and investigative capability provided citywide. The cost structure reflects a predictable, annual operating expense rather than large capital spikes, allowing the city to budget the technology as a sustained public safety service rather than a one-time purchase.

Assessment

Flock Safety's LPR platform provides law enforcement with a high-impact, privacy-conscious investigative tool that strengthens crime prevention, accelerates investigations, improves clearance rates and enhances public trust through transparency and accountability.

Requested Modifications

There is no modification request during this time as cameras are still be installed in 2025 and expected to continue into 2026.

Body Worn Cameras
(Axon Enterprise – Scottsdale, Arizona)

Body worn cameras serve as essential tools for the Columbia Police Department. They provide accurate documentation of police-citizen interactions, arrests and critical incidents while enhancing the accuracy of officer reports and court testimony. These cameras also assist officers in documenting crime scenes, accidents and situations involving evidence collection. Through this technology, the department can ultimately foster transparency and accountability in police operations.

General Description
The Columbia Police Department pioneered the use of body worn cameras in Missouri, implementing Axon Enterprise's camera system department-wide in July 2014. These devices capture officers' interactions with citizens and automatically upload the recorded footage to Evidence.com, making it accessible to supervisors, investigators and court officials. The footage has proven invaluable in various contexts, including administrative investigations, officer-involved shooting inquiries and criminal cases.

In 2025, the department made significant strides in enhancing and taking advantage of technology that increases productivity and aligns resources. The department invested heavily in the Axon catalogue of services to truly enhance officers work and accountability.

CPD has purchased the following Axon services:

1. Axon Performance
A software analytics tool that gives supervisors fast access to key performance metrics from body worn cameras, TASER devices and fleet dash cams. It's designed to cut down the manual grind of reviewing compliance and footage by highlighting policy adherence, activation rates and trends that indicate where officers might need training or corrective action. It lets the department review performance data near-real time rather than digging through files, helping identify gaps and improving accountability.

2. Axon Body 4 Camera
The latest generation of Axon's body worn camera system. It captures higher-resolution video (with a wide 160-degree field of view), has a full-shift battery, robust encryption, built-in communication capabilities and livestream functions. When paired with Axon Respond, it can send real-time location, alerts or live video back to supervisors. It's also designed to integrate directly with the broader Axon ecosystem for evidence management and situational awareness.

3. Axon Respond
A web and mobile platform that brings real-time situational awareness to incident response. It ties together live maps, video streams, automatic alerts and location data from Axon devices (like Body 4 and Fleet 3). Supervisors, commanders and real-time crime centers

can see evolving situations as they happen, stream video on demand and communicate with field personnel, which improves resource deployment and oversight during critical events.

4. Axon Auto Tagging

An AI-assisted evidence management feature that automatically suggests or applies metadata (like timestamps, locations, case numbers or other context) to video evidence. It uses transcript and sensor data to help categorize footage with minimal manual input, reduce human error and improve searchability and organization in the digital evidence system.

5. Axon Signal

Technology that triggers Axon cameras to start recording automatically based on configured events. Examples include drawing a firearm, activating emergency lights or sirens, or other sensor triggers. The goal is to catch critical moments without relying on an officer to hit the record button under stress — improving capture rates and reducing gaps in evidence.

6. Axon Fleet 3

Axon's next-generation in-car video system for patrol vehicles. It provides high-quality video capture inside and outside the vehicle, real-time awareness features and integrated analytics like automated license plate recognition (ALPR). Fleet 3 feeds into Axon Respond and the larger Axon ecosystem so agencies get coordinated views of incidents from both body worn and vehicle footage.

Integration of Services

Axon's ecosystem is designed to function as a single, end-to-end operational workflow that begins at the moment an incident occurs and continues through review and accountability. On scene, Axon Body 4, Axon Fleet 3 and Axon Signal work together to ensure critical events are captured automatically and comprehensively.

Body 4 provides the officer-worn perspective with high-quality video, audio and location data; Fleet 3 captures both exterior roadway and in-car activity while supporting vehicle-based intelligence such as license plate recognition; and Signal automatically triggers recordings based on predefined events like emergency lights, sirens or weapon deployment. This removes reliance on manual activation during high-stress encounters and ensures evidence is captured consistently from multiple angles.

Once recording begins, Axon Respond delivers real-time situational awareness to supervisors and command staff. Live video, officer locations and incident data are streamed into a shared operational view, allowing supervisors and dispatchers to monitor evolving situations, request livestreams, issue alerts and coordinate resources more effectively. This real-time visibility significantly reduces uncertainty during dynamic or critical incidents by supplementing radio traffic and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data with live video and location intelligence, improving both officer safety and command decision-making.

After the incident, Axon Evidence and Axon Auto-Tagging handle secure storage and organization of all captured media. Evidence is automatically uploaded, encrypted and tracked with a documented chain of custody, while Auto-Tagging integrates CAD or record management system (RMS) data to apply accurate metadata such as incident numbers, locations, and classifications. AI-assisted tagging further reduces the administrative burden on officers by minimizing manual labeling, improving searchability and supporting retention and disclosure requirements.

Finally, Axon Performance converts captured evidence and device usage data into actionable insights. Supervisors can analyze recording compliance, usage trends and performance indicators to identify training needs, policy issues or exemplary conduct. This analytical layer supports accreditation, internal review processes and data-driven management decisions. Together, these tools form a closed-loop system – capturing incidents automatically, supporting real-time response, organizing evidence efficiently and enabling meaningful oversight – resulting in improved accuracy, reduced administrative workload and stronger accountability across the agency.

The department's current inventory comprises 217 body worn cameras, distributed among officers, detectives and community service aides with additional units maintained in reserve.

Data Sharing

The Columbia Police Department regularly shares body worn camera footage with multiple entities, including the Boone County Prosecutor's Office and the City of Columbia's Prosecutor's Office, for criminal proceedings. The Public Defender's Office also obtains footage upon request. Members of the public can also make open records requests following the process for any other city record.

Citizen Complaints

The Columbia Police Department did not receive any complaints concerning body worn camera usage during 2025.

Internal Audits

Supervisors conduct random reviews of body worn camera recordings at least once per month. These reviews verify that the equipment is functioning correctly, confirm that officers are using the cameras correctly and following policy, and identify where officers may need additional training or guidance. Also, officers are required to self-report when they fail to activate their issued body worn cameras via internal auditing software.

During 2025, there were 44 reported instances of body worn camera non-activation or recording disruptions, which involved 29 employees. These incidents were addressed through measures ranging from verbal counselling to retraining, aligning with progressive discipline principles. To put this in context, officers, CSAs and CSIs had 129,263 community interactions in 2025, each potentially requiring BWC activation. The rate of recording failures or interruptions was approximately 0.034% of all interactions. It's worth mentioning that in cases where an officer failed to activate their body worn camera, the interaction may still have been captured by other officers' cameras at the scene and/or by the MAV.

Impact on Crime

BWCs represent a significant advancement in law enforcement's evidence collection capabilities, providing objective documentation of interactions that has transformed investigative processes and prosecutorial outcomes.

BWCs capture crucial evidence that might otherwise be unavailable or contested, including:

- Real-time documentation of crime scenes before they can be disturbed or evidence deteriorates
- Unaltered records of witness statements taken immediately after incidents
- Clear documentation of suspect behaviour, statements and physical evidence
- Verification of legal compliance during searches and seizures
- Contextual information that traditional written reports cannot convey

This enhanced evidence collection power has demonstrated measurable impacts on criminal justice outcomes. Prosecutors report that BWC footage strengthens cases by providing indisputable visual evidence that corroborates officer testimony and physical evidence. In jurisdictions with established BWC programs, conviction rates for certain offenses have increased, particularly for cases historically difficult to prosecute due to evidentiary challenges.

The evidentiary value extends beyond prosecution. BWC footage has proven instrumental in exonerating officers from false accusations, but also has been used to identify areas where departmental training or policy improvements are needed. The cameras have also provided critical evidence in use-of-force investigations, offering context that might otherwise be unavailable.

Analysis of Discriminatory or Adverse Impact

The implementation of BWCs is a vital part in promoting transparency and accountability during police-community interactions. This technology provides objective, real-time documentation of encounters, which is critical for addressing concerns related to discriminatory behaviour and adverse impacts on marginalized communities. By capturing audio and video evidence, BWCs can help identify any possible policy violations and support investigations into those allegations of misconduct. Additionally, the use of BWCs reinforces a commitment to equitable policing practices, helping to build trust and confidence within the community while holding officers accountable for their actions.

Total Cost

The Columbia Police Department marked its 11th year of body worn camera implementation in 2025. Throughout the past decade, the department has cycled through multiple contracts. The structuring of the contracts for BWC also has changed by the vendor over the years. Body worn cameras create additional time-intensive costs as officers and supervisors must catalogue and examine footage, while staff members need to review and redact recordings when responding to public records requests and legal subpoenas.

In order to take advantage of the technology and use the equipment to the best of its potential, the department has looked at the full Axon ecosystem.

The Columbia Police Department took a robust approach to integrate the Axon Ecosystem with a five-year contract of $3.25 million. The first-year payment of approximately $633,000 has been paid and there are four more yearly payments of $654,000.

The majority of this cost is driven by recurring software and evidence-management subscriptions, while upfront hardware and deployment costs may add to the cost if equipment is not fully bundled into the subscription. This variance exists because Axon pricing is highly negotiated and bundle-driven; the final per-user, per-month rate selected by the agency ultimately determines most of the total program cost over the life of the contract.

Assessment

Body worn cameras have revolutionized modern policing by serving as a critical accountability and transparency mechanism between police departments and the communities they serve. These devices provide an objective but limited record of police encounters that benefits both law enforcement and civilians. For police departments, the cameras offer valuable evidence for investigations and training opportunities while helping to protect officers from unfounded complaints. For the public, these recordings ensure greater oversight of police conduct and help build trust by allowing independent verification of officer actions during contentious situations.

Requested Modifications

The year 2025 was a building year in terms of capacity and technology. The city has realized the importance of infrastructure building and the need to expand our capacity when it comes to the integration of technology. Despite pioneering this technology over a decade ago, our department unfortunately stagnated for the past ten years while technology has advanced significantly. Thus, the Department and City has put significant funding into expanding the use of the Axon ecosystem. The department will continue to implement and monitor the rollout of this program which started in 2025 and continues in 2026.

Policy

Policy 1007 Body Worn Cameras

Mobile Audio Video

(Axon Enterprise – Scottsdale, Arizona)

Mobile audio video (MAV) recorders capture police interactions with the public, traffic violations and the transportation of individuals in custody.

General Description

Axon Fleet 3 is an in-vehicle camera and data hub system that turns a patrol car into a connected evidence platform. In practice, it's a dual-view setup (scene and plate-focused view) and interior camera, all feeding into a Fleet Hub for storage and upload into the Axon ecosystem. It's designed to support real-time awareness, automated capture and tighter linkage between vehicle video and other Axon devices (like Axon Signal triggers and Axon Evidence workflows).

Data Sharing

Fleet 3 data sharing typically means controlled distribution of video and ALPR reads or hits across officers and investigators, plus export for prosecutors and discovery purposes. The system's value rises as we are able to define: (1) who can search or see raw video vs. clips; (2) who can run ALPR searches and for what purpose; (3) retention schedules for video vs. ALPR data, and (4) documented sharing pathways (e.g., interagency case sharing, task force access, prosecutor portals) with audit trails. Fleet 3's design assumes ecosystem integration (upload, evidence management, triggers), so governance is what keeps "sharing" from turning into uncontrolled access.

Citizen Complaints

Fleet 3 usually reduces "he said/she said" disputes because it captures the stop environment and officer actions more consistently than body worn camera alone (especially around the vehicle). For complaints, the ability to faster triage issues is important.

For example: supervisors can quickly confirm whether a complaint is (a) unfounded; (b) a policy or training issue; or (c) misconduct requiring full investigation. At the same time, protecting the agency from selective editing accusations by preserving original files and metadata. The Columbia Police Department did not receive any complaints concerning MAV in 2025.

Internal Audits

Fleet 3 supports stronger internal auditing because it can be tied to automatic activation events (lights/siren/speed thresholds and other triggers via Axon Signal), which creates objective checkpoints to audit compliance (e.g., "recording started when emergency equipment activated"). An effective audit program uses a mix of (1) random video audits; (2) trigger-based audits (use-of-force, pursuits, high-risk stops); and (3) an ALPR audit sampling (hotlist governance, hit confirmation steps, query justification). The system can generate a significant amount of data. Audits focus on high-liability events and documented sampling methods.

Impact on Crime

Fleet 3's crime impact is mostly indirect but real: faster identification of suspect vehicles, improved suspect timelines, better corroboration, and higher-quality case files that push clearance and prosecution outcomes. Axon's own materials highlight Fleet 3 LPR as multi-lane/mobile and emphasize operational coverage and speed (marketing claim), which, when paired with good hotlist controls and investigator follow-through, can materially improve outcomes in vehicle-involved crimes (auto theft, burglaries with getaway vehicles, robberies, hit-and-runs etc.). The LPR is an investigative multiplier, not a "crime stopper" by itself; results depend on deployment strategy, hotlist quality, and how quickly hits get actioned.

Analysis of Discriminatory or Adverse Impact

The primary risk is not that the camera system itself is discriminatory, it's that ALPR deployment, query practices and enforcement decisions can concentrate in certain neighbourhoods or traffic corridors and amplify disparities if the department doesn't set constraints. Adverse-impact controls practices are in place that include: documented placement/deployment logic, strict hotlist source standards, hit confirmation requirements before stops, query logging with supervisory review and publicly defensible retention limits.

Additionally, the use and practice of LPR requires understanding in LPR accuracy which varies with conditions; misreads and stale hotlists create "bad stops," which can disproportionately harm community trust if not aggressively governed. Specific training on LPR is provided to all officers prior to use.

Total Cost

The Department has implemented the full Axon Ecosystem in order to take advantage of the technology and use the equipment to the best of its potential.

The Columbia Police Department took a robust approach to integrate the Axon Ecosystem with a five-year contract of $3.25 million. The first-year payment of approximately $633,000 has been paid and there are four more yearly payments of $654,000.

Based on publicly reported contract figures and using a 60-vehicle patrol fleet assumption, the estimated cost of the Axon Fleet 3 in-car camera system for the Columbia Police Department over 5 years works out to roughly $3,333 per vehicle per year. These per-vehicle figures represent the all-in contract average, not just camera hardware, and include Fleet 3 in-car cameras, associated licensing, cloud evidence storage, ALPR functionality, system integration and vendor support.

For planning and justification purposes, a defensible estimate is that Fleet 3 costs the City of Columbia about $3,333 per patrol vehicle per year, recognizing that the actual value delivered depends on policy controls, ALPR governance and how effectively the system is used operationally.

Assessment

Fleet 3 is a solid modernization move. The department needs to assure the community of (1) better in-car evidence; (2) automated activation/less officer “button pushing”; and/or (3) mobile LPR without separate legacy systems. The operational upside is real, especially for pursuits, felony stops, DUI enforcement and any vehicle-centered call types. This is achieved because the department pairs it with strict governance: retention rules, access controls, LPR policy, audit cadence and a documented complaint/investigation workflow.

Requested Modifications

There are no requested modifications at this time. With the full implementation of Axon Fleet 3 in-car video system in 2025, the Departments video evidence will be in a unified management platform, establishing streamlined storage and simplifying the department's digital video evidence ecosystem. This is also discussed above under the BWC section.

Policy

Policy 1003 Mobile Audio Video

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

(Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI) - Shenzhen, China)

The unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) program utilizes aerial technology to gather live data during critical situations, including locating missing individuals, documenting accident scenes, supporting SWAT operations, monitoring crowd conditions and detailing crime scenes.

General Description

The use of the department's UAS operations are strictly controlled, requiring personnel to complete mandatory training and obtain necessary permits, certificates, authorizations and waivers before deployment. These systems primarily serve to provide aerial views during public safety emergencies, law enforcement activities, and exigent circumstances, with all deployments requiring authorization from an on-duty supervisor and notification to the UAS commander or designee.

The systems serve multiple critical functions including providing situational awareness to help law enforcement decision makers understand incidents and plan effective responses, supporting search and rescue operations for missing persons including AMBER and Silver Alerts, documenting crime and accident scenes, offering real-time aerial perspectives for crowd control and traffic management such as during major interstate incidents, and supporting tactical deployments of officers and equipment in emergency situations to enhance response effectiveness and promote both civilian and officer safety.

Data Sharing

The Police Department does not have data-sharing agreements with other jurisdictions, although during operations, other agencies may view images captured by the drones. Examples include other law enforcement agencies during mutual aid incidents, Columbia Fire Department personnel or emergency medical services (EMS) personnel during festivals or downtown parades.

Citizen Complaints

The Columbia Police Department did not receive any complaints about the UAS program in 2025.

Internal Audits

To operate a UAS, prior approval from a supervisor is needed, though the policy contains no explicit auditing requirements.

Impact on Crime

During barricaded subject incidents, the UAS has proven invaluable for conducting preliminary searches of structures while maintaining officer safety. By deploying the UAS through open windows or doors, tactical teams can quickly gain visual intelligence of the interior layout, subject location and potential hazards without exposing officers to immediate danger. This tool enables tactical commanders to develop more informed entry plans, significantly reducing the risk to officers and suspects during the eventual tactical response.

Documented incidents have shown that subjects have fired upon and destroyed UAS devices during barricaded subject calls. These cases demonstrate the life-saving potential of drone technology, as the aircraft effectively absorbed gunfire that might otherwise have been directed at officers. In several instances, subjects who were willing to shoot at a drone showed clear intent and capability to use deadly force, confirming the high-risk nature of these encounters.

The destruction of UAS equipment, while costly, represents a tactical success when viewed through the lens of officer safety. Each drone hit by gunfire potentially represents an officer who avoided injury or death. This perspective reframes the loss of equipment as an acceptable operational cost when weighed against human life.

UAS systems also provide critical intelligence gathering capabilities that allow tactical teams to:

- Maintain a safe standoff distance while monitoring subject movements
- Identify weapons or improvised threats before officer exposure
- Communicate with barricaded subjects through drone-mounted speakers
- Record evidence of criminal activity or threats for later prosecution
- Determine the optimal entry points and tactical approaches
- Monitor multiple angles simultaneously during dynamic situations

This technology has become an essential component of modern tactical operations, particularly for high-risk warrant service, hostage situations and armed standoffs where subject intent and capability to inflict harm cannot be fully determined through traditional means.

Analysis of Discriminatory or Adverse Impact

There is no evidence to suggest UASs have any discriminatory impact on any group.

Active UAS Units and Software

Two software subscriptions support department UAS operations: Airdata ($3,340 annually), which provides flight logging and live streaming capabilities, and FARO Zone 3D ($1,128 annually), which enables crime scene mapping and accident reconstruction capabilities.

The current operational units consist of five UAS:

- One DJI Matrice M30 Thermal large quadcopter ($13,630) for extended outdoor operations, including missing person searches, event monitoring, and aerial docu mentation of crash and crime scenes.
- Two DJI Mavic 3 Thermal medium quadcopters ($5,849 each) for rapid deployment in both indoor and outdoor scenarios, particularly useful for tracking fleeing subjects and monitoring smaller events.
- Two DJI Avata small quadcopters ($2,064 each) specifically designed for indoor operations in confined spaces, such as SWAT barricade situations and interior searches.

Assessment

The Missouri legislature considered multiple bills that would prohibit the use of foreign-manufactured UAS. However, both bills failed to move forward. These bills would need to be refiled. The American Security Drone Act of 2023 (ASDA) and United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-26-02 strictly prohibits the use of federal funds for UAS manufactured by covered foreign entities.

Requested Modifications

No changes are recommended at this time in program operation. CPD is looking at purchasing drones manufactured within the United States, with increased capabilities. The department awaits potential legislative updates.

Policy

Policy 1002 Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)

Report Summary

In 2025, the Columbia Police Department continued its authorized, policy-governed use of surveillance technology to support lawful investigations, enhance officer safety and advance public safety objectives, while maintaining robust protections for privacy, civil rights and accountability. All technologies were deployed in accordance with departmental policy, City ordinance and applicable state and federal law, with established oversight mechanisms including access controls, audit logging and defined data-retention standards.

The department made significant progress in modernizing its surveillance technology infrastructure. LPR capabilities expanded substantially through the continued deployment of the Flock Safety system, reaching approximately 86% of planned citywide implementation. This system enhanced investigative capacity by providing objective, time- and location-based vehicle data to support investigations involving violent crime, property crime, missing persons and other critical incidents. No substantiated complaints were received regarding LPR usage during the reporting period. Data governance protocols, including restricted access, audit requirements and limited retention remained consistently enforced.

Body worn camera operations demonstrated high reliability and strong compliance across more than 129,000 documented community interactions. Recording failure rates remained minimal, and instances of non-activation were addressed through supervisory review and corrective action.

During 2025, the Department initiated a significant expansion of its Axon technology ecosystem, incorporating Body 4 cameras, Fleet 3 in-car video, Signal automatic activation, Respond real-time situational awareness, Auto-Tagging and Performance analytics. This expansion reflects a strategic transition toward a unified, end-to-end evidence management and accountability platform that enhances capture consistency, streamlines administrative processes and strengthens supervisory oversight.

Mobile Audio Video systems were successfully transitioned to Axon Fleet 3, integrating in-car video and mobile LPR into the same evidence management environment as body-worn cameras. This consolidation improves evidentiary integrity, enhances auditability and increases investigative efficiency by reducing reliance on fragmented legacy systems. No citizen complaints were reported related to Mobile Audio Video usage.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) continued to provide critical operational support during high-risk and time-sensitive incidents, including barricaded subjects, missing-person searches, crash reconstruction and tactical deployments. Documented use cases demonstrated clear officer safety benefits, including incidents in which UAS units absorbed gunfire during armed confrontations. Operations remained subject to supervisory authorization and applicable regulatory requirements. No public complaints or discriminatory impacts were identified.

Overall, the department's surveillance technology program in 2025 reflects a deliberate evolution from stand-alone tools to a cohesive, well-governed ecosystem. The program remains focused on maximizing investigative effectiveness, enhancing officer safety, promoting transparency and ensuring disciplined, policy-driven use. No policy modifications are recommended at this time. The department remains committed to ongoing evaluation, public reporting and alignment with evolving legal standards and community expectations.

Columbia Police Department

— 2025 —

Annual Surveillance Technology Report

city of Columbia
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